AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 38, and amend claims 1-3, 5-11, 13, 15-17, 22, 26-28, 30, 35-37, 40 and 43 as indicated among the following complete set of pending claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

(a)   ~~means~~ a data store, coupled to a network, for maintaining participant information comprising an identifier of a first participant;

(b)   ~~means~~ a conference control station, coupled to the network, for scheduling a conference, the conference being scheduled with the identifier of the first participant, wherein the conference control station determines sites for the conference by comparing available sites to locations to which participants are allowed access;

(c)   a first site comprising a first ~~means~~ conference control station for coordinating a conference coupled to the network; and a plurality of first ~~means~~ participant stations for participating in a conference coupled to the network; and

(d)   a second site comprising a second ~~means~~ conference control station for coordinating a conference coupled to the network; and a plurality of second ~~means~~ participant stations for participating in a conference coupled to the network; wherein:

(e)   the first ~~means~~ conference control station for coordinating provides a first notice of a conference; notice being provided for assuring participation by the first participant at a particular first ~~means~~ participant station for participating identified in the first notice, wherein the first conference control station selects the particular first participant station based on the status of the participant stations; and

(f)   the second ~~means~~ conference control station for coordinating provides a second notice of the conference for assuring participation by a second participant at a particular second ~~means~~ participant station for participating identified in the second notice, wherein the second conference control station selects the particular second participant station based on the status of the participant stations.

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2.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein:

(a)   the ~~means for maintaining participant information~~ data store further comprises an identifier of the second participant;

(b)   the ~~means for scheduling~~ conference control station schedules the conference with the identifier of the second participant; and

(c)   the second notice comprises the identifier of the second participant.

3.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein the ~~means for maintaining participant information~~ data store comprises a jail management system and the identifier of the first participant identifies a prisoner of the jail.

4.   (Original) The system of claim 3 wherein the second identifier identifies a visitor.

5.   (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

(a)   ~~means for communicating as~~ a network;

(b)   a plurality of participant stations ~~means~~ for participating in a conference coupled to the ~~means for communicating~~ network, the plurality arranged with at least one site having a multiplicity of particular participant stations ~~means for participating~~, the plurality including the multiplicity; and

(c)   ~~means~~ a conference control station for coordinating a conference coupled to the ~~means for communicating~~ network and located at the site, wherein the ~~means for coordinating~~ conference control station provides notice to a participant for directing the participant to a particular ~~means for participating~~ participant station[[.]]; wherein the conference control station identifies appropriate sites for the conference through comparing available sites to areas to which the participants are allowed access; and

(d)   wherein at least one participant station is located in a secured location, wherein in person contact to the participant is limited.

6.   (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

    (a)   ~~means for communicating as~~ a network;

    (b)   ~~means~~ a conference control station for operating a database comprising participant

location information; the ~~means for operating~~ conference control station coupled to the ~~means for communicating~~ network ; and

    (c)   a plurality of sites, each site comprising:

a respective multiplicity of first ~~means~~ participant stations, coupled to the ~~means for communicating, for participating in a conference~~ network; and

a respective second ~~means~~ conference control station for coordinating a conference, the second ~~means~~ conference control station physically distinct from the first ~~means~~ conference control station , the second ~~means~~ conference control station coupled to the ~~means for communicating~~ network; wherein

    (d)   notice is provided to a participant to attend a conference, notice being provided by a particular ~~means for coordinating~~ conference control station of a particular site determined in accordance with the database to be nearest the participant at a time prior to the conference and to which the participant is allowed access[[.]];

    (e)   wherein at least one of the plurality of sites is located in a secured location to which access is restricted; and

    (f)   wherein the conference control station selects a time for the participant to begin transit to the site where the conference will be held.

7.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 6 wherein the ~~means for coordinating~~ conference control station is operated by a person to provide the notice, operation being without action by the participant.

8.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 6 wherein the ~~means for coordinating~~ conference control station is operated by a coordinator.

9.   (Currently Amended) A system for conducting a conference, the system comprising:

   (a)   ~~means for communicating as~~ a network; and

   (b)   a plurality of ~~means for coupling~~ hubs, each ~~means~~ hub being for coupling a respective plurality of participant stations to the ~~means for communicating~~ network; wherein each ~~means for coupling~~ hub comprises:

   ~~means~~ a data store for storing respective indicia of the conference, wherein indicia of the conference comprise a start time, ~~and~~ identification of participant stations of the respective plurality for the conference; wherein participant stations are identified by comparing the location of available stations to locations which participants' are allowed access; and

   ~~means~~ a switch for initiating communication to conduct the conference, communication

being with the identified participant station; initiating being aborted if a signal is not received by the ~~means for initiating~~ switch from the identified participant station within a period after the start time.

10.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises a ~~means~~ sensor for detecting beginning use of the station by a participant; and the signal is provided by the ~~means for detecting~~ sensor when use by a participant is detected.

11.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9 wherein:

   (a)   the participant station comprises a ~~means~~ sensor for detecting beginning use of the station by a participant;

   (b)   the indicia of the conference further includes identification of a participant; and

   (c)   the signal is provided by the ~~means for detecting~~ sensor when use is begun by the participant identified to the station in accordance with the indicia of the conference.

12.   (Original) The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises a handset and a hook switch; and the signal is provided in accordance with operation of the hook switch.

13. (Currently Amended) A The system of claim 9, further comprising a database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the database comprising:

(a) means a schedule conference process for associating a conference identifier, a participant identifier, and indicia of a physical location where the participant is expected for participation in the conference corresponding to the conference identifier; and

(b) means a conduct conference process for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning, conducting, and recording the conference.

14. (Original) The database of claim 13 wherein the participant is at least one of an inmate, a visitor of the inmate, and a judge.

15. (Currently Amended) The database of claim 14 wherein the database further comprises:

(a) second means schedule conference process for associating the identifier of the participant, an identifier of a visitor, and indicia of a relationship of the participant and the visitor; wherein

(b) the indicia of relationship describes at least one of a familial, employment, representation, religious, and social relations.

16. (Currently Amended) A The system of claim 9, further comprising a database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the database comprising:

(a) means a schedule conference process for associating a conference identifier, an equipment identifier, and indicia of a physical location where the equipment is expected for participation in the conference corresponding to the conference identifier; and

(b) means a conduct conference process for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning, conducting, and recording the conference.

17.   (Currently Amended) A method for conducting a conference via a system having a plurality of sites, each site including a multiplicity of participant stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a tuple including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant, and an identifier of a participant station, the method comprising:

a step for obtaining a notice at the control station of a site, the notice comprising the conference identifier, the identifier of a participant, and the identifier of a participant station; ~~and~~

a step for calculating a time for a participant to begin to get ready for the conference based on a transit time associated with the participant or the participant's location; and

a step for directing a participant to a participant station in accordance with the notice, the participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant, the participant station corresponding to the identifier of the participant station.

18.   (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the participant performs the step for obtaining at a self service station coupled to the network, the self service station comprising the control station.

19.   (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein a conference coordinator performs the step for directing.

20.   (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice for a plurality of participants to be advised by the conference coordinator.

21.   (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice for a plurality of scheduled conferences involving the participant.

22.   (Currently Amended) A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a tuple including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant station, and an identifier of a participant, the method comprising:

a step for detecting the unavailability of a first participant station of the multiplicity;

a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant station of the multiplicity;

a step for comparing a wear factor associated with the alternate participant station with a plurality of wear factors associated with individual participant stations of the multiplicity of participant stations and selecting an alternate participant station with the least amount of wear;

a step for obtaining confirmation that the alternate participant station is to be used in the conference corresponding to the conference identifier;

a step for obtaining confirmation that a participant is allowed access to a location where the alternative participant station is located;

a step for revising the tuple to exclude the first participant station and to include an identifier of the alternate participant station to reschedule the conference;

a step for obtaining at the control station a notice that the conference associated with the conference identifier is to commence, the notice in accordance with the revised tuple; and

a step for directing a participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant to the alternate participant station in accordance with the notice.

23.   (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises at least one of:

a step for comparing a signal from a microphone to a first threshold to determine unavailability;

a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a microphone to determine unavailability;

a step for comparing a signal from a camera to a second threshold to determine unavailability; and

a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a camera to determine unavailability.

24.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 22 wherein the step for detecting availability comprises:

a step for assuring that the notice will be timely as provided in accordance with at least one of a transit time and a notification time associated with at least one of the identifier of the participant and the identifier of the alternate participant station.

25.   (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises:

a step for detecting at least one of the unavailability of the participant associated with the identifier of the participant and the unavailability of the first participant station in response to detecting a change in value of at least one of a transit time and a notification time associated with at least one of the identifier of the participant and the identifier of the first participant station.

26. (Currently Amended) A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a first tuple and a second tuple, the first tuple relating a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant station, and an identifier of a participant, the second tuple relating the identifier of the participant and a location of the participant, the method comprising:

> a step for detecting a revision of the second tuple; and

> a step for rescheduling the conference in accordance with the revised second tuple[[.]];

> a step for determining the location of participant stations available for the rescheduled conference; and

> a step for comparing the location of available participant stations with locations to which the participant is allowed access.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26 wherein the step for rescheduling comprises a step for canceling the conference corresponding to the conference identifier of the first tuple.

28.   (Currently Amended) A method for conducting a conference via a system, the system

including a multiplicity of participants and a database for maintaining a tuple of a conference

identifier and an identifier of a first participant, the method comprising:

      a step for detecting the unavailability of a participant corresponding to the identifier of

the first participant;

      a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant; ~~and~~

      a step for revising the tuple to exclude the identifier of the first participant and to

include an identifier of the alternate participant, to reschedule the conference[[.]];

      <u>a step for determining whether or not the participants are allowed to have a conference</u>

<u>with each other;</u>

      <u>a step for revising the tuple based upon the allowability of the conference;</u>

      <u>a step for determining whether or not the conference should be recorded and if</u>

<u>recorded, whether or not the participants should be notified of the recording; and</u>

      <u>a step for revising the tuple based on whether or not the conference is to be recorded.</u>

29.   (Original) The method of claim 28 wherein the first participant is at least one of a

human participant, an equipment participant, a data participant, and a recorder channel.

30.   (Currently Amended) A method for scheduling a first conference in accordance with a request, the request comprising indicia of a plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

    a step for maintaining for at least one participant of the plurality a list of participants the at least one participant may confer with;

    a step for confirming that each participant of the plurality may confer with every other participant of the plurality;

    a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of future times;

    a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the first list including times after the start time;

    a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of unavailable times;

    a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;

    a step for intersecting all participant availability lists to form an opportunity list;

    a step for determining whether recording the conference between the participants is desired;

    a step for determining whether recording the conference is allowed;

    a step for determining whether the participants of the conference should be notified that the conference is being recorded;

    a step for scheduling the first conference in accordance with a selected item of the opportunity list, wherein scheduling of the first conference is conditional on acceptance of a score based on a transit time associated with a participant of the first conference: and

    a step for rescheduling a second conference after scheduling the first conference, the second conference being rescheduled to eliminate a conflict with the first conference, wherein rescheduling of the second conference is conditional on acceptance of a score based on a transit time associated with a participant of the second conference.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein:

(a) the step for scheduling comprises a step for posting to a database a record comprising a conference start time; and

(b) the step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of unavailable times comprises a step for obtaining a query result from the database.

32. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein the step for forming a respective second list comprises a step for assuring that times associated with lower ranking conferences are not excluded from the second list.

33. (Canceled)

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein scheduling of the first conference is further conditional on acceptance of a score based on at least one of:

(a) a count of the total number of conferences that would have conflicts with at least one of the schedule of the first conference and the schedule of any rescheduled conference; and

(b) a count of the total number of at least one of coordinators and participants associated with the first conference and any rescheduled conference.

35. (Currently Amended) A method for scheduling a conference among stations of a plurality in accordance with a first request formed at a first station of the plurality, the first request comprising indicia of a plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

    a step for maintaining for at least one participant of the plurality a list of participants the at least one participant may confer with;

    a step for confirming that each participant of the plurality may confer with every other participant of the plurality;

    a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of future times;

    a step for sending a second request to a second station of the plurality, the second request comprising indicia of at least one particular participant of the plurality of participants and the start time;

    a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the first list including times after the start time;

    a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of unavailable times;

    a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;

    a step for receiving a response to the second request, the response comprising an availability list of the particular participant;

    a step for intersecting all participant availability lists including the availability list of the particular participant to form an opportunity list;

    a step for forming a proposed schedule of the conference in accordance with a selected item of the opportunity list;

    a step for providing a notice to the second station in accordance with the proposed schedule; and

    a step for scheduling the conference in accordance with a response to the notice.

36.　(Currently Amended) A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a database, at least two conference coordinators and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising a ~~means~~ microphone for inputting audio and a ~~means~~ sensor for detecting use of the microphone by ~~the~~ a participant ~~of the means for inputting audio~~, the method comprising:

　　　　a step for recalling from the database a start time for a conference;

　　　　a step for detecting use of the respective microphone ~~means for inputting audio~~ of each station; ~~and~~

　　　　a step for coupling the conference participant stations for the video conference in accordance with whether use was detected at each station within a respective predetermined time that includes the start time[[.]];

　　　　a step for revising the start time in accordance with failing to detect use of the respective microphone of each station within the respective predetermined time;

　　　　a step for beginning the conference when use of the respective microphone of each station is detected within the respective predetermined time;

　　　　a step for terminating the conference when one of the at least two conference coordinators determines that a participant's behavior is inappropriate; and

　　　　a step for terminating the conference when termination of use of the microphone is detected.

37.　(Currently Amended) The method of claim 36 wherein the method further comprises:

　　　　a step for presenting a notice at each station that the station has been scheduled for the conference; and

　　　　a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to begin using the ~~means for inputting audio~~ microphone.

38.　(Canceled)

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39. (Original) The method of claim 36 wherein:

(a) the database is stored in part at each station; and

(b) the step for recalling is accomplished at each station with reference to a respective part of the database.

40. (Currently Amended) ~~A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a database and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising means for inputting audio and means for detecting use by the participant of the means for inputting audio, the method~~ The method of claim 36 further comprising:

a step for determining an end time of a conference in accordance with the database;

a step for displaying at each station a remaining duration of the conference; and

a step for decoupling the conference participant stations to discontinue video conferencing in accordance with the end time.

41. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the step for displaying a remaining duration displays a continuously updated remaining duration.

42. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein:

(a) the database is stored in part at each station; and

(b) the step for determining an end time is accomplished at each station with reference to a respective part of the database.

43. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 40 further comprising:

a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to cease using the ~~means for inputting audio~~ microphone; and

a step for presenting at each station an instruction for the participant to leave the station.

44. (New) A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a tuple including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant station, and an identifier of a participant, the method comprising:

a step for detecting the unavailability of a first participant station of the multiplicity;

a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant station of the multiplicity;

a step for comparing a wear factor associated with the alternate participant station with a plurality of wear factors associated with individual participant stations of the multiplicity of participant stations and selecting an alternate participant station with the least amount of wear;

a step for obtaining confirmation that the alternate participant station is to be used in the conference corresponding to the conference identifier;

a step for revising the tuple to exclude the first participant station and to include an identifier of the alternate participant station to reschedule the conference;

a step for obtaining at the control station a notice that the conference associated with the conference identifier is to commence, the notice in accordance with the revised tuple; and

a step for directing a participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant to the alternate participant station in accordance with the notice.